

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress  
2nd Session

Vote No. 185

July 7, 1998, 6:32 p.m.  
Page S-7564 Temp. Record

## VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS/Space Station

**SUBJECT:** Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1999 . . . S. 2168. Bumpers amendment No. 3062.

### ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 33-66

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, S. 2168, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1999, will provide a net of \$93.332 billion in new budget authority, which is \$4.940 billion more than last year (a 5.6 percent increase) and \$749.5 million less than requested. Funds will not be expended on the Kyoto Protocol unless it is ratified, and the Environmental Protection Agency will be required to report on how it would implement the treaty if ratified. Discretionary funding for the Veterans Health Administration will be \$17.62 billion (\$232 million more than requested by President Clinton).

**The Bumpers amendment** would terminate the Space Station Program. Of the \$2.3 billion in this bill for that program, \$850 million would be spent on termination costs, \$1 billion would be given to the Veterans Health Administration, and the remaining \$450 million would be spent on welfare housing.

**Those favoring** the amendment contended:

Our colleague from Arkansas is as wrong this year about the Space Station Program as he was last year, as he was the year before, as he was every other year he has offered this same tired amendment. Each year, he lengthily mischaracterizes both the cost and the value of the program. His basic argument is always the same: he has a list of experts who say that the Space Station is useless except to gather data necessary to prepare for a flight to Mars. Our response, too, is always the same: we have our Space Station endorsements, including from the American Medical Association and the National Academy of Sciences, we have our list of experts who say that the Space Station will yield enormous practical benefits for Americans, and, each year, we are then able to

(See other side)

YEAS (33)		NAYS (66)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (12 or 22%)	Democrats (21 or 48%)	Republicans (43 or 78%)	Democrats (23 or 52%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Baucus	Allard	Helms	Akaka	Inouye- <sup>2</sup>
Ashcroft	Bryan	Bennett	Hutchison	Biden	
Chafee	Bumpers	Bond	Inhofe	Bingaman	
Coats	Byrd	Brownback	Kempthorne	Boxer	
Collins	Conrad	Burns	Kyl	Breaux	
Hutchinson	Daschle	Campbell	Lott	Cleland	
Jeffords	Dorgan	Cochran	Mack	Dodd	
Lugar	Durbin	Coverdell	McCain	Feinstein	
Snowe	Feingold	Craig	McConnell	Ford	
Specter	Harkin	D'Amato	Murkowski	Glenn	
Thomas	Hollings	DeWine	Nickles	Graham	
Warner	Johnson	Domenici	Roberts	Kerrey	
	Kennedy	Enzi	Roth	Kerry	
	Kohl	Faircloth	Santorum	Landrieu	
	Lautenberg	Frist	Sessions	Lieberman	
	Leahy	Gorton	Shelby	Mikulski	
	Levin	Gramm	Smith, Bob	Moseley-Braun	
	Moynihan	Grams	Smith, Gordon	Murray	
	Reed	Grassley	Stevens	Reid	
	Wellstone	Gregg	Thompson	Robb	
	Wyden	Hagel	Thurmond	Rockefeller	
		Hatch		Sarbanes	
				Torricelli	

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

back our experts up by listing off the advances that have been, and are being, made from the limited amount of space research that has been possible without the Space Station. Our colleague has his theory, but every year the list of results that prove his theory wrong grows; that list will grow explosively as soon as the Space Station is deployed. One discovery will likely soon result in a cure for every existing and future strain of the flu; another will be used to improve combustion efficiency, with environmental benefits and potential yearly savings of more than \$8 billion, which is four times as much as the annual cost of building the Space Station.

We of course do not know what exactly we will discover by creating the Space Station. Over the years, a large number of the most astonishing and helpful scientific breakthroughs that have come from space research have been found to have many applications beyond the purposes for which they were originally intended. One example that most Senators are familiar with is the development of nonflammable clothing for astronauts, which has certainly found an additional use--nonflammable baby pajamas--that all Senators applaud. Literally hundreds of everyday products were derived from America's space programs.

Our colleagues have made their regular yearly complaint that the United States cannot afford to build the Space Station. In response, spending on the Space Station costs less than one-seventh of 1 percent of the Federal budget. The country is deeply in debt because of the growth of entitlement spending on social welfare programs, not because of the ever declining amount that it spends on scientific research. In total, the United States spends only 1.9 percent of its budget on research. That amount is only a fraction of the 5.7 percent it spent in 1965. Investing in the future does not bring immediate benefits, and often, it may not result in tangible benefits for decades. Every Senator knows that research investments are investments in our children and grandchildren, not present voters, and for that reason it is difficult to get many Senators to support it.

The new complaint we have heard during this debate is that the General Accounting Office's cost estimate for building the Station has gone up from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to \$21.9 billion today, due to schedule delays, additional prime contractor costs, additional crew return vehicle costs, and costs from delays in Russia building the Service Module. The GAO now says that the total cost will be some \$96 billion instead of \$94 billion to build, launch, and operate the station for 10 years (though that estimate dishonestly includes more than \$51 billion for Space Shuttle flights, which will take place with or without the Space Station). Frankly, \$2 billion in slippage after several years on this huge project, which is on the cutting edge of technology and is a unique effort, is remarkable. We are used to seeing huge and unavoidable cost increases for defense and science projects because there are so many unknown factors when one is working on radically new and better projects. Our colleagues are complaining mightily, but they know that few research projects have ever done as good a job of staying on budget as has the Space Station. It is harder to predict costs when one is building the new and the best. Further, though we realize that there will likely be further cost problems (for instance, Russia may not be able to pay its share), the Station is already mostly built so the final costs simply cannot climb that much more.

Senators should always support research, in tight budgetary times as well as in times of plenty. Research is an investment in our children's future instead of in the next election--the benefits of learning and advancing end up making everyone better off. The Space Station Program represents only a very tiny part of the overall Federal budget, but in our opinion, it is one of the best Federal programs ever. Space research now for the United States is basically limited to conducting experiments of 2 weeks or less on shuttle missions and some joint missions on the aging Russian space station Mir (which has more limited capabilities). The extended experiments that will be possible on the Space Shuttle should reap enormous benefits. We are confident that most of our colleagues agree, and will therefore join us in defeating the Bumpers amendment.

**Those opposing the motion to table contended:**

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has now said the total cost of this station over the years will reach \$96 billion. Each year, the cost to complete it goes up, and each year the expectations of what it may achieve go down. Much of the recent increase in costs has come because Russia is broke, and thus cannot afford to pay for the part that it is supposed to be building. In fact, we have been told that the power has been turned off to the Russian facility that is working on the Space Station because that facility has not paid its electric bill. When the Space Station was first proposed, it was to fulfill the following missions--a staging base, a manufacturing facility, a space-based observatory, a transportation node, a service facility, an assembly facility, a storage facility, and a research facility. All but the last of those missions have been abandoned. Senators, and NASA scientists, still make claims that it will make a wonderful microgravity research station. However, nearly every expert we have consulted has said that having a manned microgravity research station makes no sense because the movement of the astronauts will ruin the experiments, and further, that doing any microgravity research, whether manned or unmanned, is of marginal value. As Dr. Bloembergen of Harvard summed it up, "microgravity is of microimportance." There is one mission for the Space Station that is not commonly discussed. That mission is to gather data on maintaining human life during long-duration space flights in preparation for a flight to Mars. We do not doubt many of our colleagues favor a manned space flight to Mars. We absolutely do not. Going to Mars will not require any new technological achievements. We already have the capability; the only question is whether we are foolish enough to assume the expense.